

# 8

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

*The Historic and Cultural Resources Element of the General Plan recognizes that an aesthetic environment and connections to culture and history are essential characteristics of a community that values its quality of life. The purpose of the Historic and Cultural Resources Element is to provide policy guidance to protect, preserve, and enhance the city's cultural and historic resources.*

## 8.1 CONTEXT

Cultural resources are defined as the collective evidence of the past activities and accomplishments of people. Buildings, objects, features, sites, and structures with scientific, historic, and cultural value are all examples of cultural resources. Cultural resources are finite and non-renewable resources that once destroyed cannot be returned to their original state.

Archaeological resources are places where human activity has measurably altered the earth or left deposits of physical remains. Archaeological resources may be either prehistoric (before the introduction of writing in a particular area) or historic (after the introduction of writing). The majority of such places in this region are associated with either Native American or Euroamerican occupation of the area.

Historic resources are those buildings, structures, objects or sites that are generally 50 years of age and which have significance due to their association with key events, individuals or ethnic groups, or which possess high artistic values. A nineteenth century railroad station, a mid-century modern office building, an early vernacular farmhouse or an ethnic neighborhood, all have the potential to be historic resources.

Contemporary Native American resources, also called ethnographic resources, can include archaeological resources, rock art, and the prominent topographical areas, features, habitats, plants, animals, and minerals that contemporary Native Americans value and consider essential for the preservation of their traditional values.

### Relationship to General Plan Goals

Historic preservation is important in economic revitalization and heritage tourism. The adaptive reuse of older buildings is also “green” and contributes to the City’s commitment to become fully sustainable. The Historic and Cultural Resources Element’s historic resource objectives and policies provide a philosophical context and road map for the City’s historic preservation program and are implemented through the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance.



Santa Fe Depot (1899) HP#111 (National Register)  
Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton



Bing Kong Tong Association Building (1900) HP #066  
Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton



Del Webb Building (1964)  
Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton

This Element provides objectives and policies that support the following General Plan goals:

6. Protect, preserve, and enhance natural, historic, and cultural resources.  
*Emphasize the continued protection of important natural, historic and cultural resources in the future development of Fresno. This includes both designated historic structures and neighborhoods, but also “urban artifacts” and neighborhoods that create the character of Fresno.*
15. Improve Fresno's visual image and enhance its form and function through urban design strategies and effective maintenance.
17. Recognize, respect, and plan for Fresno's cultural, social, and ethnic diversity, and foster an informed and engaged citizenry.  
*Emphasize shared community values and genuine engagement with and across different neighborhoods, communities, institutions, businesses and sectors to solve difficult problems and achieve shared goals for the success of Fresno and all its residents.*

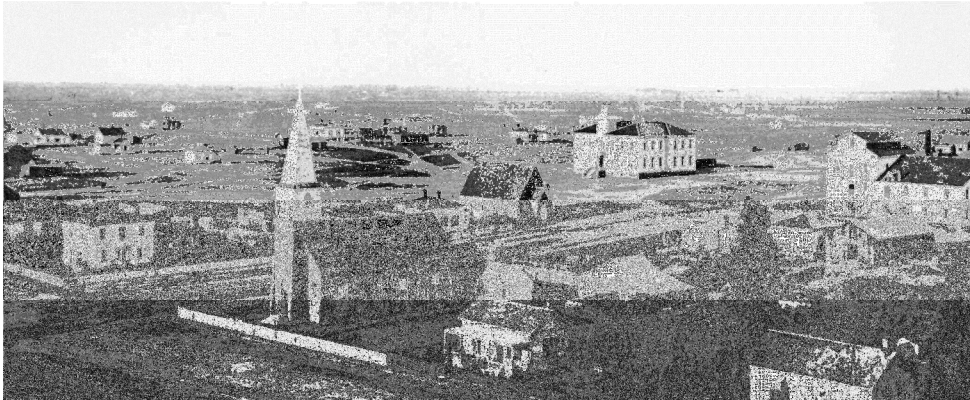
## Historic Context

The Yokuts were the first residents of the Fresno area, with small tribes occupying the floodplains of the Big Dry Creek and the Little Dry Creek. There were no missions in the San Joaquin Valley but there were small Mexican era settlements such as Pueblo de las Junta, located at the confluence of the San Joaquin River and the Fresno Slough. The Spanish and Mexican influence is indicated through place names such as “Fresno,” which means “ash tree” and which was first applied to the Fresno River. Following the Gold Rush of 1849, miners were drawn to the southern gold fields, and cattle ranchers and dryland farmers moved into the area.

In 1870, the Central Pacific Railroad began its diagonal push down the San Joaquin Valley. The railroad reached what is now Fresno in late April 1872. The location was uninviting at best, with barren sand plains in all directions. The nearest substantial supply of water was the San Joaquin River, 10 miles to the north. In 1872, the Contract and Finance Company, a subsidiary of the railroad, laid out the town in a rigid “gridiron” plan. The town grew slowly but in 1874 wrestled the county seat away from the former mining town of Millerton.

In 1875, the first of many agricultural colonies was developed in Fresno, drawing farming families from around the United States and from Europe. These colonies were constructed with miles of tree-lined boulevards and with water delivered to the individual farms through a lacework of canals, laterals and irrigation ditches.

Fresno was incorporated as a city in 1885, and with incorporation came improvements to the infrastructure. The 1887 boom in agriculture and land values brought prosperity to the community. In 1889 alone, buildings with an estimated value of one million dollars were erected along Mariposa Street in the heart of Downtown. By 1890, the population of Fresno was over 10,000, and land outside the original town site was subdivided into streets and lots. The depression of 1893 had little effect on the city, probably due to its agricultural base.



*Fresno Panoramic (c1886)*

*Photo: Courtesy of Fresno Historical Society Archives*

The first horse drawn streetcars were introduced in 1892, and this greater mobility allowed for the construction of a variety of streetcar suburbs. Although the original “parent grid” of Fresno was parallel to the diagonal rail corridor these new subdivisions were surveyed to line up with the agricultural sections. As a consequence odd-shaped triangular lots still exist where the new grids meet the old.

By 1900, Fresno was the market center of what is now the richest farming region in the United States. Emigrants from Scandinavia, China, Japan, Armenia, Russia (Volga Germans), Mexico, and most recently Southeast Asia have contributed to the character and cultural heritage of the area.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, the Downtown was completely transformed, as elegant Victorian-style blocks and hotels were demolished and smaller buildings were eventually refaced with a modern storefront. What emerged was a more rational Classic Revival city, influenced by the latest trends in architectural design emanating from American cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, as well as international cities such as Paris.

Fresno continued to grow following World War I, and in 1930, the city had a population of 52,513. While the Great Depression brought hardship to the city, it also resulted in the construction of a series of major civic buildings in the city through Franklin Roosevelt’s “alphabet soup” of agencies. For example, the complex of buildings at Fresno’s Chandler Airfield/Fresno Municipal Airport was constructed in 1936-7 with funding from the Works Progress Administration.

During and after World War II, there was a severe housing shortage as thousands of homeless transients arrived in the city, looking for agricultural work. In addition, returning servicemen and their families also needed housing. The first major post-war

subdivision completed was Mayfair, which included the first suburban shopping center. Manchester Center followed in 1955, with Fig Garden Village in 1956. Six blocks of the Downtown were converted to a pedestrian mall in 1964, with a design by landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. However, the suburban flight of the 1960s and the construction of the Fashion Fair shopping complex in 1969 helped lead to the decline of the Fulton Mall and the Downtown area.



*Hmong Strawberry Farmer  
Courtesy of Joel Pickford*



*Detail, Pacific Southwest Bank Building (1923) HP  
#52 Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton*

Today, Fresno is home to a diverse population, which includes descendants from the city's earliest pioneers and recently arrived immigrants. For many residents, the city still functions as a small town, despite its large size. Residents value the agricultural green belt that surrounds the city, with its geometric fields of grapevines and row crops; the Classic Revival high rise buildings along the Fulton Mall; the city's ethnic diversity; and the opportunities available for improving one's quality of life.

## Fresno's Historic and Cultural Resources

### HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

As with many California towns of the nineteenth century, Fresno has a wealth of residential architectural styles. Due to fires and redevelopment in Downtown, the earliest building stock is gone, with a few notable exceptions. Examples of the late Queen Anne style survive, while the "Victorian" city has largely disappeared. Other residential building styles that are well represented in Fresno include Craftsman bungalows, Neoclassical cottages, American Foursquare, and Period Revival buildings, such as Tudors and Spanish Eclectic.





*Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Fresno Memorial Auditorium (HP# 058) was built in 1935 in Downtown Fresno with partial funding from the PWA. For many years during the twentieth century, it was Fresno's most significant cultural facility.*

*Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton*

In addition, Fresno has a vernacular tradition of building in adobe and hardpan, including mid-century modern garden office complexes constructed of stabilized adobe brick. Additional important local property types are the extant summer kitchens (*backhaus*) constructed by the Volga Germans, the "bungalow courts" scattered through the city's older neighborhoods and tankhouses tucked behind or adjacent to a farmhouse. The city's rail, agricultural, and ethnic history is imprinted on the landscape and in the resources, both above and below ground, which link residents to their past and provide a design aesthetic for new construction.

#### HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

In 1979, the City adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance, which was amended and updated in 1999, 2009, and 2012. The Ordinance established both a citizens' Historic Preservation Commission and a Local Register of Historic Resources, modeled on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places. The Local Register includes three separate landmark programs: individual designation on the Local Register of Historic Resources, inclusion within a Local Register District, and inclusion in the Heritage Property program. In 2004, Fresno was the first city in California to be designated a "Preserve America Community" by former First Lady Laura Bush. This program recognizes communities that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their

historic assets for economic development and revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.



*Garden office, 5151 N. Palm Ave. (Stevens and Zellmer)  
Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton*

The City maintains a Local Register of Historic Resources that includes buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts that have sufficient integrity and are significant in Fresno's history. As of January 2014, there were 271 individual properties on the Local Register (over the years several resources have been removed from listing). Local Register properties include the Fresno Buddhist Temple (1920), the Fresno Memorial Auditorium (1935) and the Helm Building (1914).

Twenty-eight buildings and sites on the Local Register are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These "crown jewels" of the community include local landmarks such as the Old Fresno Water Tower (1894), the Thomas R. Meux Home (1889) and the streamline modern Tower Theatre (1939). Fourteen properties are also listed as Heritage Properties, such as the 1962 Calwa Rocket.

In addition to individual listings, Fresno has three designated historic districts: the Porter Tract (near Fresno City College), Wilson Island (near the Tower District), and



the Chandler Airfield/Fresno Municipal Airport. At least twelve other districts have been recommended through surveys, community or Specific Plans.



*Detail, Tower Theater (1939) HP#190/National Register  
Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton*



*Old Fresno Water Tower (1894) HP#001/National Register  
Photo: Khaled Alkotob*

#### NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES

There have been sixteen Native American archeological sites recorded within the Planning Area by the Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center (SSJVIC), a depository for information on cultural resources. According to the SSJVIC the probability of finding subsurface cultural resources is considered low to moderate in most areas, with the exception of the waterways. Current and past waterways and their surrounding regions are considered especially sensitive for cultural resources, as indigenous people utilized these areas as permanent villages, temporary camps, and task specific sites.

As part of the General Plan update process, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) conducted a record search of the sacred lands file. The NAHC response listed 11 local Native American tribes that may have historic ties to the Planning Area, and letters of inquiry were sent, along with follow up phone calls, to the 11 tribal representatives; however, no responses were received. Nonetheless, the NAHC has characterized the City of Fresno as being “very sensitive” for potential impacts to Native American sacred sites and prehistoric deposits.

## 8.2 CITYWIDE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The following policies are intended to maintain and enhance a citywide program for historic and cultural preservation, consistent with the State and Federal Certified Local Government program and State laws and regulations related to historic and cultural resources.

Nothing in the General Plan is intended to identify or designate any significant resources, potential significant resources, significant districts or potential significant districts. Identification and designation of resources and districts shall be done consistent with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and State and federal law.

## Citywide Program

### OBJECTIVE

**HCR-1** Maintain a comprehensive, citywide preservation program to identify, protect and assist in the preservation of Fresno's historic and cultural resources.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**HCR-1-a** **Certified Local Government.** Maintain the City's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG), and use CLG practices as the key components of the City's preservation program.

**HCR-1-b** **Preservation Office, Commission and Program.** Maintain the Preservation Office, Historic Preservation Commission, and preservation program to administer the City's preservation functions and programs.

**HCR-1-c** **Historic Preservation Ordinance.** Maintain the provisions of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, as may be amended, and enforce the provisions as appropriate.

## Identification and Preservation

### OBJECTIVE

**HCR-2** Identify and preserve Fresno's historic and cultural resources that reflect important cultural, social, economic, and architectural features so that residents will have a foundation upon which to measure and direct physical change.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**HCR-2-a** **Identification and Designation of Historic Properties.** Work to identify and evaluate potential historic resources and districts and prepare nomination forms for Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources and California and National registries, as appropriate.

***Commentary:** Historic resources include buildings, structures, objects, and sites, as well as cultural and historic landscapes and traditional cultural properties (as defined by State and federal law). Examples of the latter categories include farm complexes, canal systems, signage, gardens, landscaped boulevards, and infrastructure, such as lighting and street furniture. As appropriate, nominations may be forwarded to the State Historic Resources Commission for consideration for the California Register of Historical Resources and/or the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Preservation Commission is anticipated to play a key role in this process, including the evaluation of historic resources and districts.*

**HCR-2-b**

**Historic Surveys.** Prepare historic surveys according to California Office of Historic Preservation protocols and City priorities as funding is available.

***Commentary:** Early actions would be to survey historic resources located within the Bus Rapid Transit corridors slated for development and intensification and within the South Industrial District just south of Downtown. The results of these surveys would be posted on the City's website for use by the public and others interested in the City's historic resources.*

**HCR-2-c**

**Project Development.** Prior to project approval, continue to require a project site and its Area of Potential Effects (APE), without benefit of a prior historic survey, to be evaluated and reviewed for the potential for historic and/or cultural resources by a professional who meets the Secretary of Interior's Qualifications. Survey costs shall be the responsibility of the project developer. Council may, but is not required, to adopt an ordinance to implement this policy.

**HCR-2-d**

**Native American Sites.** Work with local Native American tribes to protect recorded and unrecorded cultural and sacred sites, as required by State law, and educate developers and the community-at-large about the connections between Native American history and the environmental features that characterize the local landscape.

***Commentary:** Development on archaeologically sensitive sites requires on-site monitoring by appropriate Native American consultant(s) and a qualified archaeologist for all grading, excavation, and site preparation activities that involve earth-moving operations.*

**HCR-2-e**

**Alternate Public Improvement Standards.** Develop and adopt Alternate Public Improvement Standards for historic landscapes to

ensure that new infrastructure is compatible with the landscape; meets the needs of diverse users, including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians; and provides for proper traffic safety and drainage.

***Commentary:** City of Fresno Historic Preservation Commissioners and staff will work collaboratively to develop Alternate Public Improvement Standards for historic landscapes, such as Kearney Boulevard.*

**HCR-2-f**      **Archaeological Resources.** Consider State Office of Historic Preservation guidelines when establishing CEQA mitigation measures for archaeological resources.

**HCR-2-g**      **Demolition Review.** Review all demolition permits to determine if the resource scheduled for demolition is potentially eligible for listing on the Local Register of Historic Resources. Consistent with the Historic Preservation Ordinance, refer potentially eligible resources to the Historic Preservation Commission and as appropriate to the City Council.

**HCR-2-h**      **Minimum Maintenance Standards.** Continue to support enforcement of the minimum maintenance provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, as may be amended, and enforce the provisions as appropriate.

***Commentary:** The City of Fresno's Preservation staff and Commission will coordinate with the Code Enforcement division on enforcement.*

**HCR-2-i**      **Preservation Mitigation Fund.** Consider creating a preservation mitigation fund to help support efforts to preserve and maintain historic and cultural resources.

***Commentary:** Preservation mitigation funds are intended to be used for the restoration of historic properties or cultural heritage programming, and may be generated through a plan or program or other qualifying mechanism to allow for payment of fees to reduce impacts from loss of historic resources.*

**HCR-2-j**      **Window Replacement.** City staff will evaluate potential opportunities for identification of window replacements to ensure historic integrity is maintained while encouraging sustainability. In addition, city staff will evaluate window replacements in federally funded housing projects on a project-by-project basis with consideration for health, safety, historic values, sustainability, and financial feasibility.

- HCR-2-k City-Owned Resources.** Maintain all City-owned historic and cultural resources in a manner that is consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as appropriate.
- HCR-2-l City Historic Preservation Team.** Establish an inter-departmental Historic Preservation team to coordinate on matters of importance to history and preservation.
- HCR-2-m Local Register Listing.** Recommend that property owners, who receive funds from the City of Fresno for rehabilitation of a property, consent to listing it on the Local Register of Historic Resources if the property meets the criteria for age, significance, and integrity. Publicly funded rehabilitation properties which may meet Local Register criteria will be presented to the City's Historic Preservation Commission for review.
- HCR-2-n Property Database and Informational System.** Identify all historic resources within the city designated on the Local, State, or National register, and potential significant resources (building, structure, object or site) in existence for at least 45 years, and provide this information on the City's website.

***Commentary:** This information will help notify City staff, applicants and the public regarding historic resources and potential historic resources, allowing it to be incorporated into development and other projects at an early stage. Due to the passage of time and the increasing number of sites involved, it is anticipated a significant number of additional potential historic resources may be continually added to the website, and the City will strive to keep the website up to date. Inclusion of potential historic resources on the website does not make them historic resources until formally designated as required by law, and the fact that a potential historic resource is listed or not identified on the website does not preclude the City from subsequently determining it may or may not be a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.*

### 8.3 THE NEW CITY BEAUTIFUL

A great city is a mix of older buildings and new buildings, where the past is respected, but change is also considered vital for a healthy community. Historic preservation can play an important role in economic revitalization and heritage tourism. The adaptive reuse of older buildings is prudent and contributes to the City's commitment to



resiliency. In the Fresno Green program, described in the Context section 7.1 of Chapter 7, “New City Beautiful” policies recognize the importance of these philosophical connections by referencing the urban planning principles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which linked art, architecture, urban planning, and health.

Fresno’s history is rooted in agriculture, which still forms the basis for much of its heritage, industry, and wealth. The preservation of cultural and historic landscapes in general—and the conservation of agricultural lands in particular—is a critical component of protecting and promoting Fresno’s identity. A major component of this General Plan is the preservation of nearby agricultural landscapes through the promotion of infill and compact development and the decision not to pursue expansion of the City’s Sphere of Influence. The Urban Form, Land Use, and Design Element contains objectives and policies regarding the preservation of agriculture; objectives and policies presented below expand on the specific idea of supporting a New City Beautiful concept.

#### OBJECTIVE

**HCR-3** Promote a “New City Beautiful” ethos by linking historic preservation, public art, and planning principles for Complete Neighborhoods with green building and technology.

#### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**HCR-3-a** **Adaptive Reuse.** Promote the adaptive reuse and integration of older buildings into new projects as part of the City’s commitment to nurturing a sustainable Fresno.

**HCR-3-b** **Public Art.** Collaborate with the arts community to promote the integration of public art into historic buildings and established neighborhoods. Link arts activities (such as Art Hop) with preservation activities.

**HCR-3-c** **Context Sensitive Design.** Work with architects, developers, business owners, local residents and the historic preservation community to ensure that infill development is context-sensitive in its design, massing, setbacks, color, and architectural detailing.

### Outreach and Education

#### OBJECTIVE

**HCR-4** Foster an appreciation of Fresno’s history and cultural resources.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- HCR-4-a**      **Inter-Agency Collaboration.** Foster cooperation with public agencies and non-profit groups to provide activities and educational opportunities that celebrate and promote Fresno's history and heritage.
- HCR-4-b**      **Heritage Tourism and Public Education.** Promote heritage tourism and the public's involvement in preservation through conferences, walking tours, publications, special events, and involvement with the local media.
- HCR-4-c**      **Training and Consultation.** Provide training, consultation, and support in collaboration with Historic Preservation Commissioners to community members regarding Fresno's history, use of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and the California Historical Building Code, as time and resources allow.
- HCR-4-d**      **Public Archives.** Maintain public archives that include information on all designated historic properties, as well as historic surveys, preservation bulletins, and general local history reference materials. Post survey reports, Historic Preservation Commission minutes and agendas, and other information of public interest on the historic preservation page of the City's website.
- HCR-4-e**      **Preservation Awards.** Continue to recognize the best work in preservation and neighborhood revitalization as may be appropriate through programs such as the biennial Mayoral Preservation Awards program.
- HCR-4-f**      **Economic Incentives.** Investigate the potential for developing a Mills Act program and possible sources of funding for the Historic Rehabilitation Financing Program.



*The H.H. Brix Mansion (1919) HP #089*  
*Photo: Karana Hattersley-Drayton*